

All relay center buildings, real estate, permits, rights-of-way or clearances necessary to operate the Relay System as specified in this RFP and the Commission's rules;

All telecommunications trunks, cables or lines connected to the relay center in order to receive or initiate telecommunications for the purposes of providing the Relay System as specified in this RFP and the Commission's rules;

All telecommunications or other facilities and equipment required in order to provide the Relay System as specified in this RFP and the Commission's rules;

All supplies, furniture or miscellaneous items required in order to provide the Relay System as specified in this RFP and the Commission's rules; and

All personnel and the training of such personnel required in order to staff and operate the Relay System as specified in this RFP and the Commission's rules.

ITAC seeks to provide the most cost-effective and efficient Relay Service possible. Each proposal will include a comprehensive description of the methods used and price to satisfy the RFP requirements. All responses will address in detail the following requirements.

1. Location: ITAC has made no determination that any specific center location is mandatory or desirable. Each bidder is encouraged to offer several options regarding relay center location and relay traffic routing. Among other options, ITAC encourages proposals that would identify a primary relay center that would handle a significant percentage of Illinois relay calls.

Bidder shall describe each option in detail. If Bidder's options are priced differently, Bidder shall so state, and shall provide a price quotation for each option in Section IV.H. Because the choice of relay centers and relay traffic routing can significantly impact Relay Service quality, Bidders should provide a careful, comprehensive, detailed explanation of each option offered. For each option proposed, such explanation shall include (but not be limited to):

identification of the relay center location(s) that would handle Illinois TRS traffic;

identification of any other state or governmental relay services presently served by each such relay center;

a detailed description of the present and proposed relay center staffing;

a detailed explanation of why Bidder proposes to provide Relay Service from such relay center(s); and

a full, detailed description of the advantages and disadvantages of each option proposed.

In addition, for any Relay Service option that utilizes two or more relay centers to handle Illinois TRS calls, Bidder shall:

state with specificity the minimum and maximum daily and monthly percentages of Illinois TRS traffic to be handled by each relay center;

explain in detail the circumstances that would determine the proportion of Illinois relay traffic routed to each relay center; and

describe in detail the procedures utilized to insure uniformity in call handling and contractual compliance.

If Bidder's proposal offers a dynamic call routing technique (so that each call to the Relay Service is routed to the first available CA within Bidder's network, regardless of the relay center to which the call was initially routed), the proposal shall provide detailed information regarding (i) the relay centers that would handle Illinois TRS traffic, (ii) the percentage of calls to be routed to each center, and (iii) the procedures that Bidder would use to ensure seamless access to the next available CA in any relay center, transparency to the user, and contractual compliance.

If ITAC selects a proposal that includes dynamic call routing, ITAC shall retain the right, at its sole discretion, to remove Illinois relay traffic from any relay center or centers upon written notification to Bidder. In the event that ITAC exercises its option to remove its traffic from any relay center or centers, Bidder shall nevertheless be obligated to maintain the Relay Service standards and requirements set forth in this RFP, its proposal and the contract.

If ITAC selects a proposal that utilizes a primary relay center, Bidder shall agree that any change in the designated primary relay center location or the in the minimum percentage of Illinois calls to be handled by such relay center during the term of the contract must be requested in writing by the successful Bidder and approved in advance in writing by ITAC.

Please note that Section III.L requires that Bidder submit with its proposal statistical data substantially in the form outlined in Section V.E.1 of this RFP for each month of 1998 separately for each relay center that Bidder operates.

2. Key Personnel and Qualified Staff: Mandatory. It is essential that Bidder provide an adequate staff of experienced personnel, capable of and devoted to the successful accomplishment of work to be performed under the contract. Bidder must assign specific individuals to manager and supervisory positions. Bidder will provide to ITAC a dedicated customer service manager within the designated

primary relay center, or, if ITAC selects a proposal that does not utilize a primary relay center, within the relay center that will handle the largest proportion of Illinois TRS calls. Once assigned to work under the contract, Bidder shall not remove or replace the customer service manager without prior written notification to ITAC.

Mandatory. Each proposal shall include an organization chart depicting levels and numbers of Relay Service personnel and identifying all Relay Service management and their areas of responsibility. Bidder shall describe its programs for recruiting qualified individuals with Relay Service experience and with experience working within the deaf and/or speech disabled community. All Bidder Relay Service personnel must be familiar with the special needs of the customer bases which will be served. The Relay Service will not utilize volunteer relay CAs.

3. **Equipment: Mandatory.** Bidder will furnish all necessary telecommunications equipment and software, initially and throughout the term of the contract. The transmission circuits will meet or exceed FCC and Commission interexchange performance standards for circuit loss and noise. All telecommunications equipment, including station terminals, shall be capable of receiving and transmitting in both Baudot and ASCII codes. The Relay System shall be capable of automatically identifying incoming TTY signals as either Baudot or ASCII and automatically adapting to the signal of the user. Bidder shall state in its proposal whether its equipment is capable of automatic identification of an incoming call as a TTY or voice call. Bidder shall describe methods of accessing and being accessed by computers.
4. **System Design: Mandatory.** Bidder will describe in detail the type of equipment and staffing level requirements necessary to meet the service standards required by this RFP and to handle the types of calls and projected call volumes. Bidder shall provide a network design diagram indicating the quantities and types of inbound and outbound circuits necessary to provide service under this RFP. Unless otherwise indicated, TRS shall conform to 83 Ill. Adm. Code 730, as it may be amended from time to time.

To the extent that there are differences, Bidder shall state how calls from TTY users to voice users will be handled differently from calls from voice users to TTY users.

Bidder shall, at no additional cost to ITAC, upgrade or adapt its system to comply with all TRS requirements imposed by the FCC and the Commission.

Bidder shall demonstrate that the Relay System is, and will continue to be, updated and upgraded continuously to incorporate state-of-the-art technology for telecommunications relay systems. Bidder shall demonstrate that its Relay System

is compatible with all commonly marketed TTY and telebraille equipment, including the UltraTec and Ameriphone TTY equipment distributed by ITAC.

5. Network Access: **Mandatory.** The Relay Service shall be capable of processing intrastate and interstate calls that originate in Illinois, and (to the extent that it is technically possible) international calls that originate or terminate in Illinois. The Relay Service will be designed to process all calls normally provided by carriers, including but not limited to, non-coin sent paid, third party number, person-to-person, calling card and collect calls; calls accessing pagers, answering machines, and voice mail; and three-way and conference calls. Bidder shall describe in detail its plan to meet this specification.
6. Access to the Relay Service: **Mandatory.** The Relay Service shall be accessed by callers via toll-free telephone numbers. Callers shall be required to dial (enter) no more than 11 digits in order to access the relay system. ITAC's TRS is currently accessed through separate toll-free telephone numbers for English TTY callers, English voice callers, Spanish TTY callers, and Spanish voice callers. Bidder's proposal shall (i) maintain use of the current toll-free numbers providing access to Illinois TRS, and/or (ii) transition to use of 711 for both voice and TTY callers. Bidder's proposal should fully explain how it would implement its proposal, and how any transition would be accomplished with minimum of disruption and confusion to TRS users.

Illinois residents shall be able to make intrastate, interstate, and international calls from within Illinois via the same toll-free numbers. In addition, to the extent that it is technologically possible, Illinois residents shall be able to receive international calls via the Relay Service. The Bidder shall indicate from which international locations TRS is not presently technologically possible (if any) and why. The Relay System shall identify and distinguish between intrastate, interstate, and international minutes of use.

All toll-free numbers utilized to access Illinois Relay Service, with the exception of 711 or other FCC-imposed access numbers, and the name "Illinois Relay Center" shall be the property of ITAC.

7. Access to 900 Services: Bidder shall describe whether and how it proposes to handle calls made to 900, 976 and similar pay-per-call services through the Relay Center. ITAC has made no determination at this time regarding the necessity or desirability of such service. Bidder shall state whether it has developed a methodology to ensure that the user, and not the Relay Center, is billed for such calls and, if so, shall explain the methodology in detail.
8. Access to 800 and Toll-Free Services: **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide a means of reaching regionally-restricted 800 numbers, new toll-free services (888, 877, etc.), and the business offices of local telephone companies that have special

prefixes or three-digit numbers, all of which would be accessible to a telephone user in his or her calling area. Such means must be transparent to the user. Bidder shall describe in detail its plan to meet this specification.

9. Service Reliability: The proposed Relay Service must be designed to meet the following reliability specifications:

- a. **Uninterruptible Power: Mandatory.** The Relay System shall have adequate redundancy features functionally equivalent to the equipment in normal central offices, including uninterruptible power for emergency use. Bidder shall provide uninterruptible power from a battery backup system for a minimum of eight hours. The uninterruptible power system must support the switch system and its peripherals, switch room environmentals (air conditioning, fire suppression system, emergency lights and system alarms), CA consoles/terminals, CA work site emergency lights, and call detail recordkeeping. Bidder shall describe in detail its plan to meet this specification.

Desirable. In addition to the above minimum requirements, ITAC would like to consider other uninterruptible power system options. These include: additional hours of battery backup; potential connectivity to a Bidder-supplied generator; and/or other Bidder-recommended solutions which would be fully compatible with the hardware system(s) bid. Bidder shall describe in detail its plan to meet this specification.

- b. **Switching System: Mandatory.** The switching system shall include a redundant CPU on "hot standby" to ensure that no calls are dropped due to processor failure, a full maintenance and administrative terminal with keyboard, screen and printer capabilities, on-line system monitoring, real time programming capabilities which will not take the system off line, the ability to perform preventive maintenance without taking the Relay System off-line, and an inventory of spare critical components (to be defined by Bidder in its proposal) maintained on site to ensure the required levels of service are met. Bidder shall describe in detail its plan to meet this specification.
- c. **Intercept Messages: Mandatory.** The Bidder's Relay System shall provide intercept messages as appropriate if a system failure occurs within the relay switch or on outbound circuits. Such intercept messages shall be provided for both voice and TTY users. Intercept messages on inbound circuits shall be provided to the extent that they are under the control of the Bidder. ITAC shall have input on the wording of any intercept messages.
- d. **Disaster Recovery Plan: Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide and implement a disaster recovery plan for dealing with all types of natural and manmade problems. Such plan shall include the following minimum notification

requirements: (i) Bidder shall notify ITAC's Executive Director within 3 hours or, if outside ITAC's regular office hours, at the beginning of the next business day, of any service disruption lasting more than 30 minutes and (ii) Bidder shall provide to ITAC, within 24 hours of the occurrence of any service disruption, a detailed written report of such service disruption. Such report shall include, at a minimum, the time of occurrence, extent, cause, remedy, and time of resumption of service. In addition, Bidder's disaster recovery plan shall detail the levels of escalation which Bidder shall employ to deal with each service disruption and to restore service.

Desirable. As an augmentation to the above minimum requirements for a disaster recovery plan, ITAC would like to see details that address how Bidder plans to cope with specific types of disasters. These may include: alternate switching of calls including network diagrams identifying where traffic will be rerouted if vulnerable circuits become inoperable; the provision of up to 50% redundant circuits to geographic areas where users are concentrated; a contingency plan for how disasters will be handled which are not part of the network but which may affect the network (e.g., a fire in a central office which affects Relay Service); and/or other areas which Bidder considers important to include in a disaster recovery plan.

10. **Service Expansion: Mandatory.** Bidder shall demonstrate that it has the capability of expanding Relay Service, at no additional cost to ITAC other than the contracted cost per Conversation Minute of use, in response to growth in demand. Bidder shall develop and explain in its proposal a detailed plan of how this expansion will be accomplished, including, but not limited to, trunking capacity, CA work stations, personnel, staffing, and equipment capacity. The plan shall demonstrate that Bidder is prepared to meet projected and/or reasonable changes in call volumes and shall indicate the time lag required to meet any unanticipated increases in call volume. The plan shall be able to maintain all standards listed in this RFP and permit the most cost-effective use of available resources.
11. **New Technology: Mandatory.** Bidder will describe in detail its capability to adapt to improvements in communications equipment technology and to implement state-of-the-art technology for provision of telecommunications Relay Service. Bidder's proposed Relay System shall permit users and ITAC to benefit from advances in technology in a cost-effective manner. Bidder shall describe the methodology and process it will use to keep abreast of technological changes in the provision of Relay Service, to inform ITAC that new enhancements are available, and to provide ITAC the opportunity to utilize such enhancements or upgrades to the service. Bidder shall comment on compatibility with digital services. ITAC shall retain the right to accept or refuse any or all such new features, services or enhancements.

Bidder shall, at no additional cost to ITAC, upgrade or adapt its system to comply with all TRS requirements imposed by the FCC and the Commission.

12. Video Relay Service: ITAC is interested in reviewing Bidder's capability and experience, if any, in providing Video Relay Service. However, ITAC has made no determination whether such service is desirable or cost-effective.
13. Public Relations: **Desirable**. ITAC encourages Bidder to describe its national and system-wide public relations programs, including videos, websites, or other materials designed to promote the use of TRS and educate the public regarding TRS.
14. Disability Awareness: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall ensure that all Relay Service staff, including management, receive training in understanding written ASL, deaf culture, speech disabilities, and ethics and confidentiality. Bidder's proposal shall include an outline of a staff training plan indicating training topics and time frames as well as qualified individuals or organizations representing the deaf community who will assist with the training.
15. Voice and Hearing Carryover, Text to Text, Spanish to Spanish and other Capabilities: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall provide standard TRS, Spanish-to-Spanish TRS, voice and hearing carryover, voice-to-voice, text-to-text, three-way calling, and conference calling capability upon request of a user. Bidder's proposal shall describe in detail the foregoing call types and explain how they are handled. Bidder's Relay System shall provide Communications Assistants who, in addition to meeting all CA standards, are competent Spanish speakers to provide Spanish-to-Spanish Relay Services to users in cases where both the caller and the called party speak Spanish.

Desirable. Bidder is encouraged to describe in detail all other call types that it is capable of handling and explain how they are handled. Bidder should state whether it is able to provide speech-to-speech relay and, if so, how such calls are handled.

16. Costs of Interstate and International Long Distance Calls: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall treat all interstate (including interstate 800, 888, and 877) and international costs involved in providing its service (e.g., CA time, facility and equipment usage, overhead, billing and administrative costs, etc.) as completely separate from intrastate costs. Bidder's proposal shall explain how it will ensure this separation. Bidder will agree that ITAC will not be required to reimburse Bidder for any costs or charges associated with the provision of Relay Services for interstate and international calls. Compensation for interstate and international calls will be according to FCC guidelines and shall not be the responsibility of ITAC.

17. Billing for Long Distance Services: **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide for billing for intrastate, interstate and international long distance services to a user's choice of carrier, at the rate that would apply if the call had been placed without the use of the Relay Service and, if the user desires, using the selected carrier's calling card or other major credit card. This rate shall not affect any applicable discounts offered to TRS users by the carrier. Bidder shall include in its proposal a complete description of how Bidder shall provide such service.
18. Billing Arrangements: **Mandatory.** The Bidder must provide for collect calls, person-to-person calls, calls to or from hotel rooms, and calls charged to a third party. The Bidder must also provide for billing to any Illinois local exchange company calling card and to interexchange company calling cards and other major credit cards. Bidder shall describe how it proposes to handle calls placed on prepaid calling cards and through prepaid calling packages. Bidder shall comply with FCC and Commission requirements regarding billing for coin sent-paid calls. Bidder shall be permitted to decline to complete a call because credit authorization is denied.
19. Call Billing Record: **Mandatory.** Bidder shall specify the system for identifying and documenting long distance and toll calls, intraMSA and interMSA 800, 888 and 877 calls, and 900 and 976 calls (if accepted) for billing purposes. The billing record shall contain, at a minimum, the following information:
 - a. Telephone number or credit card number to be billed (NPA prefix-line number)
 - b. Originating telephone number (NPA-prefix-line number)
 - c. Terminating telephone number (NPA-prefix-line number)
 - d. Date
 - e. Start time (the time when the calling party is initially connected to the called party or to a recorded message or intercept for the called number)
 - f. End time (the time when either the called party or the calling party hangs up)
 - g. Call time to the full second (the time in between start time and end time)

Bidder's Relay System must be automated as completely as possible. Handwritten tickets are not acceptable. Bidder shall forward the call billing record to each LEC or interexchange carrier as promptly as possible, but in all cases within 14 days of the date such service was provided.

Bidder shall also fully describe its billing process, including identification of any subcontractors, specific duties of the subcontractors, how the billing record detail will be transmitted to the LECS and interexchange carriers.

20. Access to Local Exchange Company Discretionary/Optional Services: **Mandatory.** Bidder will provide methods enabling the relay user to utilize existing local exchange discretionary/optional services (such as three way calling)

on calls completed through the Relay Service. Bidder shall also explain in detail how it will ensure relay users access to new discretionary/optional services offered in the future.

Desirable. ITAC encourages proposals to provide to users with optional “enhanced” services such as caller ID service and call return. Caller ID and call return service should transmit actual caller identification information to the called party, notwithstanding that the call is transmitted via the Relay System.

- C. **SYSTEM STANDARDS:** Bidder shall agree that, at a minimum, its Relay System shall provide users access to the telephone network which is functionally equivalent to that provided to those who are not disabled in their ability to use the telephone, and shall comply with all FCC and Commission requirements. To achieve this standard, the Relay System must have, without limitation, the following characteristics:

1. **Usage: Mandatory.** Bidder shall ensure that no restrictions will be placed on the length or number of calls, consecutive or otherwise, placed by users through the Relay Service. If requested by the caller, CAs shall attempt to complete calls three times, consecutively, without delay when receiving busy signals.
2. **Blockage Rate: Mandatory.** Bidder shall maintain adequate staffing and network facilities at its relay center(s) serving Illinois to ensure that the Average Daily Blockage Rate for all Illinois calls shall not exceed 1%. Bidder shall not block calls before or into the automated call distributor.

“Average Daily Blockage Rate” shall mean, for each 24-hour period, the percentage equal to the number of calls to the Bidder’s relay center that are blocked in each 24-hour period, divided by the total number of calls placed to the Bidder’s relay center in such 24-hour period. Bidder shall measure Average Daily Blockage Rate by sampling the number of calls being blocked at a minimum of every 30 minutes for each 24-hour period. Abandoned calls, calls encountering a busy signal, calls which take in excess of 30 seconds to answer, and calls in which more than 30 seconds elapses between receipt of dialing information and dialing of the requested number will be considered “Blocked Calls” for purposes of this calculation.

3. **Average Answer Time: Mandatory.** Bidder shall maintain adequate staffing and network facilities at its relay center(s) serving Illinois to ensure that the Average Daily Answer time for all Illinois calls will be no more than 7 seconds, with a standard deviation of 2.9 seconds.

Bidder shall maintain adequate staffing and network facilities at its relay center(s) serving Illinois to ensure that, at a minimum and except during network failure, 85% of all calls shall be answered within 10 seconds, on a daily basis, by a live CA prepared to place the call at that time.

No more than 30 seconds shall elapse between the receipt of dialing information and dialing of the requested number.

“Average Daily Answer Time” shall mean, for each 24-hour period, the mean time to answer each incoming call to Bidder’s relay center(s) in such 24-hour period by a CA prepared to place the TRS call at that time. The time to answer shall commence once a TRS call first passes into Bidder’s network facilities, regardless of the network configuration used by Bidder. Bidder shall measure Average Daily Answer Time by sampling the average answer time at a minimum of every 30 minutes for each 24-hour period.

4. **Operator Assistance: Mandatory.** Bidder will provide callers with access to local and long distance directory assistance.
5. **Complaint Resolution: Mandatory.** Bidder will describe its procedures for addressing complaints, commendations, inquiries and comments regarding the Relay Services and personnel. Bidder shall ensure that any caller to the Bidder’s relay center having a complaint will be able to reach a supervisor or administrator while still on line during a relay call. In addition, Bidder shall make available a toll-free number for handling consumer complaints, with live personnel available to handle complaints, on a 24-hour basis.

Bidder shall ensure that all complaints received by supervisors, verbal or written, will be documented, reported to ITAC as they occur and on a monthly basis as a part of the monthly reports, and kept on file and available to ITAC upon request for examination. The documentation and reports shall include, at a minimum, the nature of the complaint, the relay center where the complaint originated, the person or persons handling the complaint, and the resolution of the complaint.

6. **Conflict of Interest: Mandatory.** To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, Bidder shall demonstrate in its proposal that it will operate its service as an independent Relay Service. Bidder shall not use any information obtained from relay calls for any other services they may provide to users of the Relay Service and will not make any such information available, for sale or otherwise.
7. **Consumer Input and Quality Sampling: Mandatory.** Bidder shall ensure that, if requested, management personnel of Bidder, including the Illinois account manager, are in attendance at each Advisory Council bi-annual meeting.

Bidder shall monitor Relay Service quality by placing at least 300 anonymous relay test calls monthly. Such calls shall be initiated equally by voice and TTY callers, and shall be placed at a variety of times and on a variety of days. The quality of such calls shall be judged on specific points agreed upon by ITAC and Bidder. Bidder shall report monthly to ITAC the results of its quality monitoring, in a format acceptable to ITAC.

8. User Assistance: **Desirable**. Bidder may propose to provide a separate toll-free number that users may access to receive information on how to place a relay call, tips for improving the efficiency of relay calls, information on new Relay Service functions or changes in the service, etc. The number (or numbers) will be accessible to TTY users and non-TTY users.
9. User Preferences: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall offer a caller profile service that permits Relay Service users to register their relay preferences (such as voice carry over) in a database that automatically identifies the caller by his or her telephone number, sets up the requested features, and informs the CA of the caller's preferences. Bidder shall describe the full content (format and information categories) of its customer preference database. The customer preference database shall be confidential and shall not be provided to any other relay vendor.
10. Call Release: **Desirable**. ITAC wishes to incorporate a method for releasing calls from a CA when the call originator reaches a compatible communication protocol. This methodology will be employed under the following conditions:
 - a. When a TTY caller reaches a compatible TTY unexpectedly, except in the case of text-to-text calls;
 - b. When the called party identifies the existence of a TTY;
 - c. When the calling party is a voice caller and reaches a voice called party or voice answering machine, except in the case of speech-to-speech calls.

The CA, upon consent of the calling party, will have the ability to release the call so that the two parties can communicate independent of the relay function. Bidder shall describe its ability to provide this function and how the billing record would reflect the release.

11. Ability to Handle Alternative Protocols: **Desirable**. Bidder should address its ability to allow utilization of alternative protocols which take advantage of faster typing speeds, such as turbocode or turbocode-like software. Bidder should also explain whether and how its technology can permit users to downgrade when necessary, automatically and at a customer's request, to accommodate voice carry over, telebraille devices, sight-disabled users, etc. In addition, Bidder should describe its ability to permit a TTY user to interrupt the CA.
12. Automatic Error Correction: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall utilize automatic error correction software to decrease the number of common spelling errors and improve relay performance.
13. Use of Automatic Number Identification: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall utilize Automatic Number Identification (ANI) technology so that no caller is required to give his or her originating telephone number, except in instances where ANI information is not available from the LEC.

14. Use of Advanced Intelligent Network Routing: Desirable. ITAC strongly encourages Bidders to offer Advanced Intelligent Network (AIN) routing, allowing a TTY user who receives a voice telephone call to route the call automatically to the Relay Service. The TTY user should have the option to override the default routing to the Relay Service. If such service is not presently available, Bidders are requested to describe their efforts to provide such service and the date such service is expected to be available.
15. Answer Procedure and Automatic Call Set-Up: Mandatory. Bidder shall explain fully its proposed procedure for answering calls, and, to the extent that there are differences in the handling of TTY and voice calls, shall explain those differences. Bidder shall explain whether it utilizes an automatic call set-up, whereby a TTY user initiating a call through the Relay Service can input directly the telephone number of the called party. All calls shall be answered by a live CA ready to place the call. No calls shall be placed in queue once answered. No more than 30 seconds shall elapse between receipt of dialing information and dialing of the requested number.
16. Service Changes. Mandatory. Bidder shall make no changes in the relay center(s) serving Illinois, any designated primary relay center, the percentage of calls routed through any primary relay center, or the services provided to ITAC without first providing ITAC with at least 30 days written notice and obtaining ITAC's written consent.

D. COMMUNICATION ASSISTANT (CA) STANDARDS.

1. Minimum CA Qualifications: Bidder shall specify how it shall demonstrate that CAs meet all necessary proficiency requirements. CAs shall be able to quickly and accurately type TTY relay conversations. CA qualifications shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. **Mandatory.** Beginning college level skills in English grammar and diction. A neutral accent is preferred in the majority of CAs.
 - b. **Mandatory.** A minimum typing speed of 50 words per minute as determined by auditory typing testing, with 90% accuracy.
 - c. **Mandatory.** Minimum spelling skills sufficient to spell words in a beginning college level conversation quickly and easily.
 - d. **Mandatory.** Bidder shall require that all prospective CAs take and pass a quantifiable, performance-based Relay Communication Assistant Proficiency Examination that will be reviewed and approved by ITAC. This examination will cover spelling; typing; diction; relay procedures; characteristics of ASL as it may be reflected in the written language of TTY users; hearing and

speech disability cultures, languages, and etiquette; ethics and confidentiality; and professional judgment. This test will have as its minimum requirements the proficiency skills for CAs mandated by this RFP. Bidder shall ensure that material from these tests is not available to the CAs before testing time and shall change portions of the test from time to time as required to ensure that testing accurately reflects the skills of the tested CAs. CAs shall be retested at least annually. No one shall be employed or utilized as a CA until he or she has passed the proficiency examination.

- e. **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide linguistics training in pronunciations and spelling of proper names peculiar to Illinois to new and incumbent CAs as a part of any CA training, to ensure a familiarity with names and places commonly used in Illinois.
2. **Communication Assistant Training: Mandatory.** Bidder shall describe in detail how it will provide ongoing CA training and shall include with its proposal an outline of its proposed CA training plan. Bidder's on-going CA training will include, but not be limited to, ASL "gloss" and grammar, interpretation of typewritten ASL, maintenance of register, protocol in handling answering machines and computerized services, deaf culture, needs of users with speech disabilities, and operation of relay telecommunication equipment. On-going training shall include both simulated and live online call handling.

Bidder shall ensure that appropriate portions of in-service training for CAs will be provided by qualified individuals from the communities and/or professions of the deaf/speech disabled in the fields of language interpreting, ASL and deaf culture and speech disability.

Bidder shall include in its training plan ongoing CA training such as seminars, briefing sessions, and workshops to inform and update CAs on issues and topics pertinent to the deaf and speech disabled communities, including state and national legislation and policy issues. Bidder shall also include in its training plan procedures for immediate remedial training for CAs who are the subject of user complaints, which training shall be tailored to the areas of the subject CA's performance requiring improvement.

3. **Procedures for Relaying Communication: Mandatory.** CAs must convey the full content and context of the conversations they translate. All CA calls shall be carefully supervised. The CA shall relay all calls according to the following procedures:
 - a. The CA will type to the TTY user or verbalize to the non-TTY user exactly what is said, verbatim, when the call is first answered and at all times during the conversation, unless either user specifically requests summarization. The CA shall, when requested by either user, translate ASL into English.

- b. CAs will, to the best of their abilities, let the TTY user know the non-TTY user's tone of voice without making subjective judgments. However, the CA should avoid any inference regarding the speaking party's mood or demeanor which may be based on subjective judgment on the CA's part. CAs will maintain an appropriate register. When speaking for the TT user, the CA will adopt a conversational tone of voice appropriate to the type of call being made.
- c. CAs shall keep the user informed of the status of the call, such as dialing, ringing, busy, disconnected or on hold.
- d. Each TTY user shall have the option of telling the CA what aspects of the call he/she will handle. For example, the TTY user may request to introduce Relay Services to the called party, rather than have the CA do it.
- e. When the CA needs to explain relay to a hearing user, the CA will also type "(explaining relay)" for the benefit of the TTY user. Conversely, when the CA needs to explain relay to a TTY user, the CA will inform the hearing user that the CA is explaining relay. Upon request by the TTY user, the CA will not announce a call as a relay call, permitting the caller to provide explanation, if any.
- f. CAs will indicate to the TTY user if another hearing person joins the conversation.
- g. CAs shall indicate background sounds to the TTY user (e.g., dog barking, baby crying) unless requested to do otherwise.
- h. Bidder shall propose procedures to minimize changes of CAs during a call. If a change is necessary, both parties to the call shall be informed.
- i. All comments directed to either party by the CA shall be relayed. These comments will be typed in parentheses, for example, "(Will you accept a collect call?)" All comments directed to the CA by either party shall also be relayed, for example, "(Yes, I'll accept the collect call.)"
- j. To correct a typing error, CAs will not backspace, but will continue in a forward direction by typing "xx" (common TTY convention for error) and then typing the word correctly.
- k. CAs will verify spelling of proper nouns, numbers and addresses that are spoken. This will be relayed as discussed in i. above.
- l. The caller may, upon request, be switched to a CA of the gender of the caller's choice, if available (See Section V.D.7.), both at the beginning of a call and if a change of CAs is necessary during the call.

- m. Either party may request that the call be switched to another CA during the call if the party is dissatisfied with the quality of the call.
- n. The CA will stay on the line until both parties have terminated the call. At the termination of a call, the CA shall ask the calling party whether he or she desires to place another call. If necessary to process a complaint or commendation, the call will be transferred to a supervisor. Disconnects shall be made promptly at the end of each call if no sequential call or transfer is requested.
- o. CAs will not counsel, advise or interject personal opinions or additional information into any relay call. The CAs will not make any value judgments on the profanity or obscenity or legality of any conversations. CAs will not hold personal conversations with anyone calling the Bidder's relay center. The CA will close by thanking parties for using the Relay Service.
- p. Callers will not be required to give their full names or the full name of the party they are calling. This information will not be recorded in any form without the permission and knowledge of the caller (except for billing purposes).
- q. CAs shall uniformly recognize a "TB" typed by a TTY user to indicate the use of a telebrailier, and shall use appropriate pacing.
- r. The CA will reduce typing speed to accommodate the needs of the equipment and reading speed of the user, or at the request of either party.
- s. The CA shall voice a sequence of numbers in segments to allow the voice user to write them. For example, in conveying a social security number, the CA shall recite the numbers in this manner: 1 2 3, pause, 4 5, pause, 6 7 8 9. The CA shall repeat a sequence of numbers if requested so long as they are visible on the screen.
- t. CAs will leave messages on answering machines or other voice processing systems if the voice or TTY caller activates one while making the call. Bidders shall propose procedures for fulfilling this requirement, and the procedures shall include, at a minimum, the following steps:
 - i. The CA will inform the caller when an answering machine has been reached; and shall relay the answering machine message to the caller, unless the caller requests otherwise at the beginning of the call.
 - ii. The CA will ask the caller if he/she wishes to leave a message.
 - iii. The CA will leave the caller's message, either by voice or by TTY.
 - iv. The CA will confirm to the caller that the message has been left.
 - v. The caller will be charged for only one call regardless of the number of redials required to leave the message.

- u. CAs will retrieve messages from voice processing systems and relay a TTY message to a voice user or a voice message to a TTY user. Bidder will propose procedures for handling this requirement. The procedures shall include methods for obtaining any necessary system access codes from the user and statements regarding the confidentiality of that information.
 - v. CAs shall leave numerical or verbal messages on pagers, if requested to do so by a TTY user. Bidder will propose procedures for handling this requirement.
4. **Confidentiality of Calls: Mandatory.** All calls will be strictly confidential, except as otherwise required or permitted by law. No written or electronic scripts will be kept beyond the duration of the call. CAs and supervisory personnel will not reveal information about any call, including the information below, except the minimum necessary for billing purposes and except as otherwise required or permitted by law. CAs must be required to sign an agreement of confidentiality promising not to disclose the identity of any callers, their own identity, or that of fellow relay CAs or any information learned during the course of relaying calls, either during the period of employment as a CA or after termination of employment.
- a. When training new CAs by the method of sharing past experience, trainers shall not reveal any of the following information:
 - i. Names, genders, or ages of the parties to the call;
 - ii. Originating or terminating points of the call;
 - iii. Specifics of the information conveyed.
 - b. CAs will not discuss, even among themselves or their supervisors, any names or specifics of any relay call, except as required in instances of resolving complaints. CAs may discuss the general situation with which they need assistance in order to clarify how to process a particular type of relay call or in a counseling situation. CAs shall be trained to ask questions about procedures without revealing names or specific information that will identify the caller. If a user is in an emergency or life-threatening situation or causes an emergency situation to exist by threatening the CA or relay center, names and specific information may be disclosed by the CA to a supervisor to expeditiously address the situation.
 - c. Watching or listening to actual calls by anyone other than the relay CA is prohibited except as required for training or monitoring purposes or other purposes specifically authorized by ITAC and consistent with Commission rules.
 - d. Proposals will outline the policies the bidder has in place and will use to preserve confidentiality. In the case of a proposal utilizing an in-state relay

center, Bidder shall describe additional policies and procedures to be implemented to ensure confidentiality. Bidder shall comment on its past experiences regarding confidentiality in such situations. To the extent ITAC requires, additional specific policies will be developed in the start-up period after the contract award. Such policies may include protocols employees are encouraged to use to prevent unintentional disclosure of relayed conversations. A copy of the Bidder's confidentiality policy will be provided to a user upon request.

- e. A CA or supervisor who, after investigation, is found to have violated confidentiality rules and regulations will either be terminated immediately or, if the violation is the first and Bidder reasonably believes that the violation will not recur, be given a warning and automatically terminated the second time a violation occurs. Proposals will specify the policy for reviewing alleged violations of confidentiality.
 - f. Bidder will be restricted to collecting only that personal information necessary to provide and bill for the Relay Service being rendered. This information will not be used for any other purposes or sold.
 - g. Bidder shall have in place a "trap and trace" process for use in response to law enforcement request.
5. Obscenity and Abusiveness Directed to the CA: **Mandatory**. CAs are not required to tolerate obscenity or abuse directed at them. Bidder's proposal shall specify how Bidder will handle such situations. It is acceptable to transfer callers using obscenities directed at the CA to a supervisor to determine why the caller is using obscenity and to explain that obscenity directed at CAs is inappropriate. A CA shall not disconnect a call against the wishes of the originating and terminating parties without first obtaining the permission of the CA's supervisor. In the instance that a call is terminated, the supervisor shall log the reason for the termination and sign the log. The supervisor shall authorize such disconnections only in instances in which the caller is abusive or threatening to, or intentionally uncooperative with, the CA.
 6. CA Counseling: **Mandatory**. Bidder shall describe its counseling and support program(s) that assist CAs with the emotional aspects of relaying calls. CAs shall in no event give to the support person the names of the callers involved. The counseling support system must strictly follow the confidentiality provisions listed above.
 7. CA Identification: **Mandatory**. Each CA shall be identified by gender identification (M = male, F = female) and CA number (not name) only. The Bidder will establish a method which will automatically identify the CA to the user by a technical means, without requiring input from the CA. The CA identification

shall automatically be indicated to users at the beginning of a relay call and, if requested, at any time during the call. CAs will provide their location upon request only.

8. Answer Message: **Mandatory.** All calls from TTY users will be answered "IRC GA". All calls from voice telephone users will be answered "Illinois Relay Center".
9. Policy and Procedures Manual: **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide with its proposal a copy of its Communication Assistant Policy and Procedures Manual which will include, without limitation, confidentiality, ethics, handling of emergency and crisis calls, process for the supervision of CAs, consequences of noncompliance to policies, and functions and roles of a relay CA. The successful Bidder shall agree to review and revise its policies and procedures as needed throughout the term of its contract with ITAC to ensure that they are responsive to changing technology, changing regulatory requirements, and the requests of ITAC.
10. Emergencies: **Mandatory.** Illinois is partially covered by 911 communication centers prepared to handle TTY calls directly. Bidder shall describe its policy for handling and referring emergency calls. The policy shall (a) require that a CA receiving an emergency call attempt to complete the call to a Public Safety Answering Point number which the caller supplies and which can be directly accessed by the CA, and (b) include procedures for referring callers to emergency services and numbers other than 911. Bidder shall explain, among other things, (i) whether it has established a database to match the TRS caller's ANI with the appropriate emergency service number; (ii) whether it will pass the TTY user's ANI information to the emergency service operator; and (iii) how it proposes to define "emergency calls".

Bidder shall specifically describe its policy and procedure for handling emergency calls to hot lines, police and fire departments and other emergency services via Relay Service that are disconnected by the caller before identifying information is obtained. Bidder shall describe, among other things, how the emergency service can capture the telephone number of the relay user to return the call, and whether it will pass the TTY caller's ANI information to the emergency service operator, even if the TRS user disconnects before emergency personnel are connected.

E. SERVICE PROVIDER REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Relay Reports: **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide to ITAC the following written reports on a calendar month basis. More frequent or more detailed reports will also be available upon request. Bidder shall submit all monthly reports no later than the twenty-first (21st) day of each month following the month of service that is the subject of the report. It is the purpose of these reports to substantiate invoiced calls and Bidder compliance with contractual requirements, and to monitor and

evaluate performance of the Relay Service. Data, format, and presentation of the reports should reflect these objectives. Bidder's proposal should commit to cooperating with ITAC on an on-going basis to produce accurate, timely reports that serve ITAC's management needs and to modify reports or reporting formats as requested by ITAC.

- a. Reported by NPA, total daily and monthly (by calendar month):
 - i. Number of incoming calls
 - ii. Number of outgoing calls (including busy, no answer, and disconnected)
 - iii. Number of completed calls
 - iv. Number of abandoned calls
 - v. Number of Blocked Calls, as defined in Section V.C.2, by reason for blockage
- b. Average Daily Blockage Rates (as defined in Section V.C.2) and monthly blockage rates.
- c. Average daily and monthly percentage of calls encountering a busy signal when calling the Relay Service.
- d. Average Daily Answer Times (as defined in Section V.C.3) and monthly answer times, as well as the range of answer times for the month and the standard deviation daily and monthly.
- e. Daily and monthly percentage of calls answered within seven (7) seconds, within ten (10) seconds, and within thirty (30) seconds, as well as the range of answer times for the month, calculated both with and without redialed and abandoned calls.
- f. Daily and monthly number and percentage of calls in which the time from receipt of dialing information to the dialing of the requested number is 0 to 1 second, 1+ to 10 seconds, 10+ to 20 seconds, 20+ to 30 seconds, 30+ to 40 seconds, 40+ to 50 seconds, 50+ to 60 seconds, and greater than 60 seconds.
- g. Average daily and monthly length of call in tenths of minutes, broken down into call set-up, call duration, and call wrap-up.
- h. Total daily and monthly number of calls of the following lengths:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 0-10 minutes | 10+ to 20 minutes | 20+ to 30 minutes |
| 30+ to 40 minutes | 40+ to 50 minutes | 50+ to 60 minutes |
| 60+ minutes | | |

- i. Usage patterns (number of calls, number of busy signals, number disconnected, number abandoned, and length of calls) by hour of day and day of week for each calendar month, by NPA and prefix.
- j. Number of CAs, managers and other staff on duty by hour of day and day of week, identified by relay center if more than one relay center serves Illinois TRS traffic, and broken down by full-time, permanent CAs; full-time, permanent managers; full-time, permanent other staff; part-time, permanent CAs; part-time, permanent managers; part-time, permanent other staff; full-time, temporary CAs; full-time, temporary managers, full-time, temporary other staff; part-time, temporary CAs; part-time, temporary managers; and part-time, temporary other staff.
- k. Number of and total Conversation Minutes (as defined in Section VI.H) of local, intraMSA toll; intrastate interMSA toll; intraMSA 800, 888 and 877 calls; intraMSA pay-per call services (if processed); interMSA 800, 888, and 877 calls; interMSA 900 and other pay-per-call services (if processed); interstate calls; and international calls for the month.
- l. Number of calls originated by TTY users, voice users, and users who signify TB (indicating that the caller is using a telebraille device) and average length of call for each type of call for the month in tenths of minutes, broken down into call set-up, call duration, and call wrap-up.
- m. Monthly CA turnover rates in total and by specific relay center.
- n. Total Conversation Minutes (as defined in Section VI.H).
- o. Call volumes and Conversation Minutes should be reported by class, including without limitation, TTY, TTY sequence, voice, voice sequence, and abandons; Voice Carry Over, Hearing Carry Over, text to text, and speech to speech; intrastate, interstate, and international; English and Spanish; etc.
- p. If the state is served by more than one relay center, Bidder shall report all of the above separately by relay center as well as in aggregate totals.
- q. If Illinois is served by more than one relay center, Bidder shall report the percentage of calls that are handled by each relay center in each month, and broken down by day and hour.
- r. For the purposes of expediting relay reporting, automatic electronic production of the above information is required.
- s. Bidder shall submit with its proposal the reporting format that will be used to provide all of the above information.

- t. Bidder shall include information on its capability to provide ad hoc reports including new information in Bidder's Relay System's database, information relevant to new TRS regulations, or new formats for reporting existing information.
- u. On an annual basis, no later than February 1, Bidder shall provide forecasted usage figures and costs to ITAC for the upcoming year for use in ITAC's annual program budget.
- v. On an annual basis, no later than February 1, Bidder shall provide an annual relay report for the preceding calendar year in the reporting format utilized to provide the monthly reports required by this Section V. E.1.
- w. Bidder's records and reports of relay service operations and results shall be made available during normal business hours for inspection by an individual LEC, ITAC, the Commission, the Advisory Council, or the Staff Liaison.

2. Other Reporting Requirements

- a. **Mandatory.** Bidder shall report to ITAC monthly the results of the quality sampling conducted in accordance with Section V.C.7 of this RFP.
- b. **Mandatory.** Bidder shall provide monthly summary reports to ITAC regarding numbers of complaints, commendations, inquiries and comments received by relay center and the topic areas of the complaints, commendations, inquiries and comments. Bidder shall also provide daily (as required by Section V.C.5) and monthly detailed reports indicating the nature of the complaint, relay center of origin, and how and by whom the complaint or problem was resolved.
- c. **Mandatory.** The Commission's rules require that the successful Bidder perform traffic studies and maintain records to the extent and frequency necessary to determine that the requirements of those rules are being met. Bidder shall include in each monthly and annual report a signed statement indicating the state of Bidder's compliance with rule and contract provisions.

F. PLAN FOR SERVICE START-UP

Mandatory. Bidder shall provide in its proposal a comprehensive and detailed plan for implementing the Relay Service. The plan shall include details on how Bidder shall accomplish the transition from the existing service to the new service without interruptions in service and in a manner that is as transparent to users as possible. Bidder's plan shall include arrangements either to keep the existing phone numbers to access the new service or to transition to the use of 711. If Bidder proposes to transition to the use of 711, Bidder shall provide adequate lead time, repetition of

advertising as necessary to notify users of the change, and other strategies designed to minimize customer confusion. Bidder shall include in its proposed plan a time line with critical dates for major steps in the implementation process from contract award to start date and for the first year after service has started. The definitive agreement for provision of the service will include a detailed time line with critical dates and tasks for implementation.

If Relay Service is not fully implemented at 12:01 a.m. on February 1, 2000 or any other date agreed upon by ITAC and the successful Bidder, then at ITAC's option either (i) ITAC will withhold \$25,000 per day or (ii) the successful Bidder shall pay the invoices of the incumbent TRS provider until service is fully operational.

G. YEAR 2000 WARRANTY

Mandatory. Bidder shall certify and warrant that all software, hardware, and other information technology used in connection with Relay Service shall individually and as a system accurately process all date/time data, including, but not limited to calculating, comparing, and sequencing from, into, and between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including leap-year calculations. Bidder shall agree that if any software, hardware, other information technology or system provided by Bidder does not comply with the foregoing requirements, Bidder shall provide, at no expense to ITAC, all labor, materials, and equipment necessary to make the products compliant with the requirements of this paragraph. Bidder shall further agree that, if the non-compliance is the fault of any third party, Bidder shall be responsible for ensuring compliance in a timely manner and at no cost to ITAC.

Failure to comply with the Year 2000 warranty shall subject Bidder to liquidated damages.

H. LIQUIDATED DAMAGES FOR FAILURE TO MAINTAIN SERVICE QUALITY

Bidder and ITAC shall acknowledge that in the event of a failure by Bidder to meet the performance standards of this RFP, ITAC would sustain damages that are impractical and extremely difficult to determine precisely. Therefore, the contract between ITAC and the successful Bidder shall include liquidated damages, in the amounts set forth below, as a reasonable estimate of the damage that would be sustained by ITAC due to Bidder's failure to meet service standards. These amounts shall not be ITAC's sole and exclusive remedy. Liquidated damages will not be assessed when failure to meet the required specifications is caused by forces or factors outside the control of Bidder (or its subcontractors), such as an event of natural disaster or national emergency.

Blockage Rate: ITAC will withhold \$2,500 each calendar day that the Average Daily Blockage Rate for all Illinois calls is greater than 1.0%.

Answer Performance: ITAC will withhold \$2,500 each calendar day that the Average Daily Answer Time for all Illinois calls is greater than 7 seconds with a standard deviation of 2.9 seconds. ITAC will additionally withhold \$2,500 each day that less than 85% of all Illinois calls are answered within 10 seconds. ITAC will additionally withhold an amount for each incident in which more than 30 seconds elapses between receipt of dialing information and dialing of the requested party.

Relay Reports: If the relay reports required in Section V. E.1 are not received by ITAC on or before the 21st day of the following month, ITAC will withhold \$1000 each day until the full and complete relay report is received in the ITAC Office.

Delay in Implementation of Service: If Relay Service is not fully implemented at 12:01 a.m. on February 1, 2000 or any other date agreed upon by ITAC and the successful Bidder, then at ITAC's option either (i) ITAC will withhold \$25,000 per day or (ii) the successful Bidder shall pay the invoices of the incumbent TRS provider until service is fully operational.

Changes in Percentages of Relay Calls Handled by Designated Relay Centers: If Bidder makes unauthorized changes in the monthly percentage of Illinois relay calls handled by designated relay centers, ITAC shall withhold an amount per day until such unauthorized changes are rectified.

Year 2000 Warranty: Failure to comply with the Year 2000 warranty shall subject Bidder to liquidated damages for each day of noncompliance.

Service Reliability: A disruption in relay service of more than 4 consecutive hours or more than a total of 4 hours in 24 hours shall subject Bidder to liquidated damages in the amount of the average cost of one day's service, based on the prior month's bill, per occurrence.

VI. EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PRICE PROPOSAL

A. COMPLIANCE WITH ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

At 2:00 p.m. on the Proposal Deadline, ITAC will hold a public announcement of bids at the ITAC Office. The public announcement will disclose only the names of all Bidders who have submitted a proposal.

ITAC will initially review all proposals for, among other things, the following criteria:

1. Proposals have complied with the Proposal Deadline.
2. The required elements have been submitted and are clearly identified.

B. ERRORS IN THE BID

ITAC may, at its sole option, reject a bid proposal that contains errors; however, ITAC may at its sole option retain the bid and make certain corrections. If Bidder's intent is clearly established based on review of the complete bid proposal submitted, ITAC may exercise its option to waive a minor irregularity or to correct an error based on the established intent. ITAC may also correct obvious clerical errors.

C. FINAL APPROVAL BY COMMISSION

ITAC will prepare petitions to the Commission seeking approval of its choice of a Relay Service proposal and the final contract. No contract shall be effective until approved by the Commission. Bidder's proposal shall commit to cooperating with ITAC to obtain the required Commission approvals in the event that Bidder's proposal is selected by ITAC.

D. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COST AND QUALITY

ITAC seeks to obtain cost-effective service and recognizes that quality of service is an important component of cost-effectiveness. Bid proposals to provide Telecommunications Relay Service will be evaluated based upon, among other things, the following criteria, as demonstrated in the bid proposal and through other available evidence:

1. Bidder's ability to cost-effectively achieve the Relay System requirements specified in this RFP and in 83 Ill. Adm. Code Part 756;
2. Bidder's ability to fulfill the conditions of its proposal, based on an assessment of its financial condition (e.g., net worth, cash flow, and ability to raise capital); technical, operational and managerial expertise; and past experience and level and quality of performance; and
3. Bidder's prior experience, technology, skills, and record (including its record of integrity) in providing Relay Service.

E. EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

ITAC will conduct an initial evaluation of each proposal to determine whether all of the administrative requirements listed in Section II of this RFP are followed, and whether the necessary attachments are included. Bidder shall adhere to all of these administrative requirements and address them in its proposal narrative.

F. EVALUATION OF OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

ITAC will evaluate each proposal on the operational requirements described in Section V of this RFP. All specific instructions given in the Section V must be followed. In addition to responding specifically to each of the operational requirements, in its proposal narrative Bidder shall acknowledge and agree to perform all RFP requirements and meet all the performance standards. All of the mandatory operational requirements are considered by ITAC to be critical to the operation of Telecommunications Relay Service in Illinois;

therefore, all of the mandatory requirements should be met. Objections to or omission of any mandatory operational requirements in the RFP may disqualify a bid. ITAC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive any and all irregularities.

Bidder reference checks will be made as a part of the evaluation process. Reference checks will not be limited to specific customer references cited in the proposal. They may include contacts with other relay and state officials, consumers, and organizations representing people with disabilities.

To assist ITAC in evaluating proposals, each Bidder shall submit statistical data separately for each relay center that Bidder operates in substantially the form outlined in Section V.E.1 for each month of 1998.

G. PRICE PROPOSALS

1. Pricing and Reimbursement Basis

Prices in response to this RFP and ultimate reimbursement to Bidder will be based on a price per "Conversation Minute" calculated to at least the nearest tenth of a minute. A Conversation Minute shall include only the time the calling party is:

- connected to the called party (extended by the Relay Service);
- connected to an answering machine at the called party's number; or
- connected to a recorded message or intercept for the called number.

A Conversation Minute does not include:

- call set-up;
- call wrap-up;
- calls that have reached numbers that are busy or receive no answer;
- time in queue (prohibited in Section V.C.15 of this RFP); or
- time between calls (user finishes one call and provides information for the next).

If Bidder is able to bill on a smaller incremental basis than a tenth of a minute, Bidder shall indicate the billing increment proposed.

2. Start-Up Expenses

ITAC shall not be required to pay any lump sum for the start-up expenses or expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid proposal.

3. Price Quotation

Bidder shall submit a price quotation for its proposal, and for any features for which separate pricing is requested by this RFP. If Bidder submits more than one option for